

TLC

Talk, Listen, Connect



**Facilitating NYS WIC Program
Talk, Listen, Connect Sessions**

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Chapter 1

Overview of a TLC Session



Lewis County WIC Program

What is Talk, Listen, Connect?

What is Talk, Listen, Connect?

A Talk, Listen, Connect (TLC) session is the nutrition education portion of a WIC appointment in which a group of participants gather with a facilitator to discuss a nutrition/health-related topic in an open and informal exchange. Every TLC session is a different learning opportunity because it reflects the interests, knowledge, and experiences of a new group of participants.

The TLC session is a participant-centered approach to group nutrition education. Generally, each session lasts about 15 minutes. The optimum size for a Talk, Listen, Connect session is 4-8 participants. It could be as few as 2, or as many as 10. Smaller groups allow the participants to connect with one another and allow everyone to contribute. Group members feel good when they are able to help someone else in the group.

There are three main components of a Talk, Listen, Connect session:

- ❖ Open
- ❖ Share & Connect
- ❖ Summarize & Act

Purpose of Talk, Listen, Connect

The purpose of a Talk, Listen, Connect session is to:

1. Provide an opportunity for participants to focus on their interests and learn in a pleasant, informal atmosphere.
2. Encourage participants to help each other by discussing their knowledge of a topic and sharing their real-life experiences.
3. Enable participants to share their concerns, give and receive support from each other.
4. Empower participants to make desired behavior changes.
5. Provide access to resources for participants, if desired.

The primary emphasis is on the feelings and experiences of the group members in regard to WIC-related topics.

Who has a role in Talk, Listen, Connect?

Everyone has a role! All staff who interact with participants, supervise program staff, manage programs, and evaluate staff and programs have a role in TLC. The roles will vary from supporting staff as they learn new skills, promoting TLC sessions as positive, rewarding and beneficial experiences to participants and stakeholders, to facilitating the sessions. Everyone's role is important.

Participant's Role

The participant's role is to participate in the group in the following ways:

1. Share concerns, interests, experiences, and knowledge related to the topic.
2. Brainstorm with other group members to find practical solutions to problems or ways to make desired changes.

3. Set personal goals, if ready to do so, and support others in the group who are ready to set personal goals.

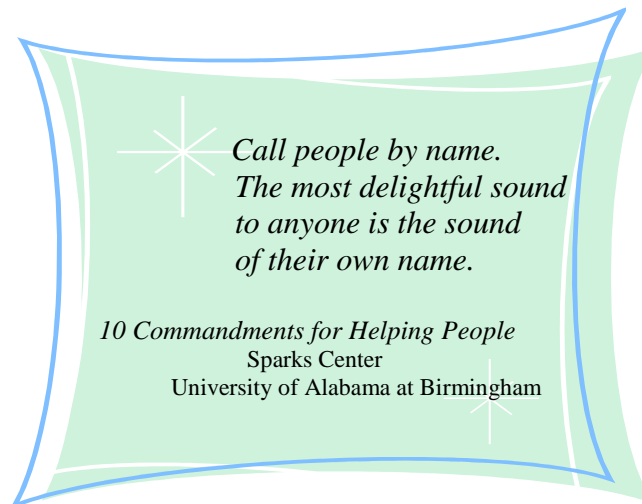
Facilitator's Role

“Facilitating” means doing the things that make it possible for other people to do what they need to do - easily. In a Talk, Listen, Connect session, the facilitator - usually a WIC CPA - makes it possible for a group of WIC participants to have a lively, interesting, educational discussion of a nutrition/health-related topic. Therefore, it is helpful that the facilitator is knowledgeable in nutrition.

The facilitator's role is to participate in the group in the following ways:

1. Act as a moderator for the group, establish a comfortable environment, allow participants to introduce themselves, set “ground rules,” introduce a topic, and close the session.
2. Encourage participation by making it possible for everyone in the group to discuss their concerns, interests, knowledge, and experiences.
3. Guide the discussion while at the same time allowing participants the freedom to explore aspects of the topic that interest them.
4. Maintain a participant-centered approach and **resist the temptation to teach.**
5. Be mindful of what is most important to the participants, rather than following a predetermined agenda or script.

The facilitator must sit in the circle with the group. If the group is sitting around a table, the facilitator should not sit at the head of the table. The facilitator is not “the star of the show,” but rather is more like a coach on the sidelines, helping the group to function well. The challenge is for the facilitator to remain in the role of coach and not teach or lecture. The facilitator sets the tone of the session by projecting personal warmth, caring, and acceptance.



Coordinator's Role

The WIC coordinator/director as well as site manager of the local agency are key to the success of TLC. The coordinator must lead staff forward through example and encouragement. The coordinator paves the way with positivity, helps with logistics, and makes sure that newcomers, as well as regular staff, are mentored. Although there are some coordinators in WIC who do not

regularly work in clinics, it is immensely helpful when they do. They are better able to mentor new staff by experiencing TLC first hand.

The coordinator facilitates discussions at staff meetings to evaluate feedback and develop new strategies with the “team.” Staff, as a group, need to be allowed time to problem-solve, as well as share their successes. This helps everyone take ownership of the shift in direction to participant-centered nutrition counseling and education, and cultivates a spirit of creativity and flexibility among team players. Success occurs when the WIC coordinator/director is open to feedback from staff and willing to try new things.

It is the coordinator’s responsibility to ensure that appropriate staff facilitate the groups (have the correct training). Every agency is unique in how they set up their groups. The coordinator supports the team and lends a hand where necessary. Their leadership is invaluable as they inspire change toward an exciting new vision of participant-centered services.

Role of Other WIC Staff

All WIC staff have the important role of establishing positive participant expectations about a TLC session. All staff can help alleviate participants’ anxiety about trying something new by promoting the Talk, Listen, Connect session as a pleasant experience.

WIC staff can help set the following positive expectations of Talk, Listen, Connect:

1. TLC sessions are NOT classes or lectures.
2. TLC sessions are low-stress and fun; not boring!
3. TLC sessions give participants the chance to learn what works for others in a casual atmosphere.
4. Staff can tell participants what others have said about TLC sessions.

“This didn’t feel like an appointment, it felt like a visit.”
(WIC participant, North Country Children’s Clinic)

The participation of clerical and nutrition support staff is vital to ensure that the entire WIC appointment process is smooth and pleasant. Support staff will be able to perform various tasks required for processing an appointment while the group is in session. All staff must contribute suggestions and work together to ensure TLC sessions run smoothly in a variety of clinic environments. One way to achieve this is to make sure that all staff, including those who don’t facilitate groups, have a chance to experience a TLC session and observe the group process.

Why use Talk, Listen, Connect?

Group nutrition education has been part of WIC for many years and has been considered a cost effective way to providing services. Groups are particularly good at combining talents and experiences of participants to provide innovative solutions to problems. Facilitated group discussions represent *participant-centered* group education. Instead of lecturing, which has limited effectiveness in promoting behavior change; TLC sessions allow participants to discuss issues that are important to them/their families in a non-threatening environment.

Group Dynamics

Groups have an energy that adds momentum to the learning process. Group discussions can bring out personal experiences and feelings in people that one-on-one interactions may not.

For instance, WIC participants in a group do not act the same way as they do during an individual nutrition education session. In general, people tend to be more relaxed and open to learning in a group because no one is singled out, and everyone shares the “spotlight and the pressure.” Facilitated group discussions are intentionally informal and personal.

Groups also generate lots of ideas. A group may start slowly and some participants may wait to see who will speak first. This is a predictable part of group dynamics. Once a discussion gets going, group members often find it stimulating to hear other people share their knowledge and experiences. This can lead participants to think of and contribute new ideas and approaches. Group members usually like to “brainstorm” with each other.

Adult Learners

The participants in a Talk, Listen, Connect session are “adult learners.” Adults bring a lifetime of core values, knowledge, experience and skills to every situation. What does a facilitator need to know about adult learners?

- Adult learners already know a lot, but whether they decide to share what they know depends on how comfortable they are.
- Adult learners are not always self-confident. They may observe how the first few comments are handled by the facilitator and the group, and then decide whether or not it is “safe” to participate.
- Adult learners are most receptive to new information or behavior change when they have a new situation to deal with (like a new baby) or when they are concerned about something (like a child not eating well).
- Adult learners are often self-conscious and don’t like to be singled out or called on. It may be that they did not do well in school and are nervous about performing or being judged in a class.
- Adult learners like to know what to expect and what is expected of them. Be clear about what their role is, as well as what your role is.
- Adult learners are more open to learning in a comfortable, fun, lighthearted atmosphere where they can participate.
- Many WIC moms feel isolated from others by having young children at home, living in a rural place, lacking family support, or other circumstances. Being in a TLC session where they are among their peers and comfortable can be a very positive experience for many.
- Everyone likes to feel valued. People feel valued when they contribute ideas to a group and help others think through problems and situations. Adult learners who feel valued are more open to new information and behavior change.

Anticipatory Guidance

One of the best things about a Talk, Listen, Connect session is that participants often provide each other with “anticipatory guidance.” This is just what it says: *guidance* that helps parents to know what to anticipate during specific situations or stages such as during pregnancy, or

from their infant or child at different ages. Effective nutrition education helps parents to know what to expect and helps them understand, for instance, the experience of pregnancy, or what the infant or child is learning to do at various developmental stages.



This kind of anticipatory guidance between friends used to happen with neighbors and friends over a cup of coffee or at the playground. Now, many parents are too busy for that kind of informal exchange.

Here is a sample of the predictable behaviors parents can help each other with during a Talk, Listen, Connect session: food cravings during pregnancy; children wanting to feed themselves, refusing to eat meat, refusing to eat at all, preferring drinking to eating; picky eaters, and food jags. These are predictable behaviors at various developmental stages, but not everybody knows that. Parents are better able to cope when they know to expect these behaviors and understand that they are normal.

Participants in a Talk, Listen, Connect session will help educate each other by sharing their experiences. Parents like to help other parents avoid the problems they have had. It builds their self-esteem to see that the experiences they have had are of value to others.

Part of the facilitator's role is to help the group share real-life stories of what has worked and not worked in various situations. We all like stories, especially stories about what works. The more you can guide discussions to the experiences and knowledge that will help parents cope, the more effective, and even popular, your Talk, Listen, Connect sessions will be.

"I'm writing these ideas down so I will be ready when my daughter gets ready (is that age)" (In a potty training discussion) Comment from participant in a TLC session, Jefferson County]

Stages of Change

One of the primary goals of nutrition education is helping participants make positive behavior changes in the areas of nutrition, food habits, infant and child feeding, parenting, and physical activity. However, changing behaviors is not an easy process, as we all know. The more facilitators understand about behavior change, the more effective they can be.

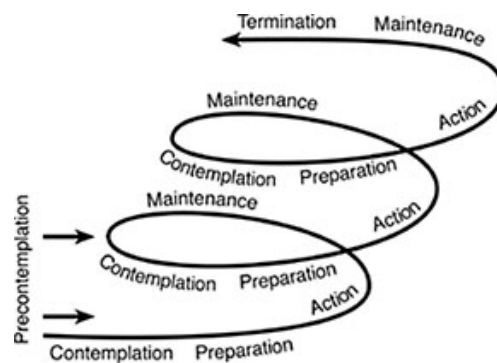
The participants in Talk, Listen, Connect sessions can help each other think through how to change behaviors in small, do-able steps; but before getting to the “action” stage, a person has to want to alter a behavior. The participants in your groups will be in different stages of change. Don’t evaluate your success in a group by the number of people willing to take action steps toward changing a behavior. Many in the group may be at an earlier stage and will need to go through other stages before moving into action.

The stages of change are:

- **Precontemplation** (not even considering making a change)
- **Contemplation** (now thinking about making a change)
- **Preparation** (now planning to make a change)
- **Action** (now making a change; less than 6 months)
- **Maintenance** (now making a change into a habit; greater than 6 months)
- **Relapse** (reverting back to a previous behavior)

People do not necessarily go through the stages one right after another to succeed; typically they cycle through the stages. Let’s take smoking for example. A person may have no intention (*precontemplation*) of stopping smoking. Then one day may really think about quitting (*contemplation*). Then may plan how to do it (*preparation*), and then try doing it (*action*). Oops, then might go back to smoking (*relapse*). At some future point, that person may think about quitting again (*contemplation*). Each of these is a step in the process of behavior change.

People cycle through the stages of change as they move toward ultimate success.



Going through the stages of change several times, however, often helps a person succeed in the long run at changing a behavior. Most former smokers, for instance, did not quit on the first, second, or even third try.

In any Talk, Listen, Connect session, there will be participants at different stages of change for different behaviors. It is important for the facilitator to understand and accept that not everyone is ready to take action or set goals on any particular behavior. The TLC session may help move a person from one stage of change to another. For instance, one might move from not even thinking about making a change (precontemplation) to considering making a change (contemplation). A person who is in the “preparation” stage of change is planning to change something they do or planning to add a new behavior. Often adding a new behavior is easier to

do than changing an established behavior. The process of setting a goal can help make the transition from the “preparation” stage to the “action” stage of change.

A skillful facilitator will not expect everyone to set a goal. A participant may offer up a behavior change if ready, but encouraging someone to make a goal can seem like pushing to the participant. If the atmosphere is comfortable, you could ask the group if any of them would care to share a behavior change goal if they have one. Saying a goal out loud, in public, helps a person commit to it. The facilitator aims to help move the participant to the next stage whatever that may be.

It is not intended for TLC sessions to push participants into setting goals. Setting goals is a very personal thing and many people may not yet be ready. However, chances are that what was talked about at the session might move them closer to setting a goal or bring about a goal they will set for themselves on their own in between appointments. Remember that thinking about trying something is a goal.

Pulse Points

Everyone has emotional “pulse points.” These are the underlying feelings we have, which can trigger behavior change. Many of our decisions are not based on logic; rather they come from tapping into our emotions. To achieve behavioral change, the first connection must be emotional; logic follows. For example, look at advertisements. Marketers know that reaching consumers on an emotional level will move them to act, e.g. buy a product. Take a closer look at advertisements and notice how they reach out and tap the emotional pulse points.

The Massachusetts WIC Program discovered through its Touching Hearts, Touching Minds project that our families share similar emotional “pulse points.” The most prominent of these are pride, security, happiness, and hope for the future.

Pride

“I want to feel good about myself when I take care of my child.”

Security

“I want to keep my child safe.”

Happiness

“I want to have a meaningful impact on my family.”

Hope for the future

“I want to lead my child towards a successful life.”



For more information visit: (www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com).

To help our participants make positive behavior changes, we need to reach participants on an emotional level and connect with their “pulse points.” These pulse points are a good basis for inspiring meaningful discussion during Talk, Listen, Connect sessions. Remember to relate to the feelings and behaviors of group participants.

How is Talk, Listen, Connect conducted?

There is a natural flow from one component to the next, mimicking the natural flow of a conversation. Talk, Listen, Connect sessions have three major components:

1. Open
2. Share & Connect
3. Summarize & Act

Open

Greet participants and help them to feel comfortable with you and this new format for nutrition education. Begin to build rapport by connecting with participants. Say your name and have all group members say theirs. A sense of group spirit develops more quickly when people use one another's names to interact. Warmly welcome children of all ages, always saying something positive and affirming to them. If possible, allow a few minutes for participants to have a chance to mingle with each other and get to know one another. It is vital that participants know what to expect especially if this is their first time attending a TLC session. You may need to explain the purpose of the group (to share and learn from each other) as well as clarify the importance of listening to others and respecting the ideas or comments of others.

The first 5 minutes can be crucial to getting people to talk, so open with a **conversation starter**. As its name implies, a conversation starter gets the discussion going. It should be a 'feeling' or emotion-based question, not a knowledge-based question. **It is the “hook” that gets to feelings quickly.** It's the story/anecdote/picture and *then* the question that gets the participants *curious* as to what will happen next. Remember to target the pulse points (Pride, Security, Happiness and Hope for the Future) and avoid knowledge based questions when formulating your opening question.

Example:

Feeling Question

How do you feel when your family eats in front of the television?

How do you feel when you see a mom breastfeeding her baby?

What is it like for you when you serve new foods, like whole grains, to your family?

Knowledge Question

Why do they recommend families not eat in front of the television?

What do you know about breastfeeding?

What are the benefits of whole grains?

Your conversation starter should capture attention by being something that arouses curiosity, is interesting, has relevance, and may even be out of the ordinary. **(Practice using some of the conversation starters provided in Chapter 3.)** It could be a health-related report you heard on the news or a magazine quote; ask them how it makes them feel. An alternative to a conversation starter is an icebreaker (Chapter 4). Icebreakers often involve an “activity” that can take more time, but usually gets everyone to open up and participate. However, sometimes these lead to random thoughts/statements that make it hard to stimulate discussion relevant to the

group. Example: “*What is your favorite food?*” The icebreaker may get such a variety of responses that the facilitator must work twice as hard to tie the responses together in order to start a meaningful conversation. Whether you choose an icebreaker or a conversation starter, keep it simple, easy, and quick. Make your job as facilitator as uncomplicated as you can.



There are a couple of ways to begin each Talk, Listen, Connect session. Your opening may be formal or informal depending on several factors such as how well acquainted you are with your participants, your comfort level with facilitation and/or your personal style. Ask yourself which style helps set the tone you want for your group and encourages the best discussion and participation. Try them out and see what works best and when. Here are some suggestions for developing your opening:

- Introduce yourself and ask each participant to introduce him/herself and share the names/ages of their children with the group. Tell the group that you are going to share in a discussion today on ‘xyz’ topic. The session will go until ___ o’clock. (As you transition to TLC, it is vital to include a brief explanation of the new style of appointment so that participants understand what to expect.)
- Roles: Emphasize that this is *their* time. Your role is to help them have a discussion in which everyone learns from each other’s experience. Remind them that your purpose is primarily to get things started and then to simply serve as a guide.
- They each know a lot. Their role is to share what they know and help each other with some of their hard-earned valuable experience. Active participation by each member is the backbone of a good TLC session.
- You may briefly call attention to “ground rules.” You want to promote a climate of acceptance and a group where everyone feels comfortable enough to speak.
- Do not mention confidentiality as part of the ground rules, but if a group member discloses something very upsetting or personal, you can ask that the group keep what was shared confidential. Participants may clam up if they think they will be expected to reveal deeply personal information right from the start.
- Use words that show you are not talking down to the participant, and encourage conversation.

Examples of opening statements:

Formal:

“I want to welcome all of you and thank you for coming. I hope we can all learn a lot today from each other and most of all have fun. I am here to help get the group and serve as a guide. Today’s discussion will be about 15 minutes long. We respect all ideas and are here to listen to and support each other, and learn from each other’s experiences.” (Continue with your conversation starter.)

Informal:

“My name is ____ and I am glad to be here today with you. I hope we can share and learn from each other today.” (Continue with your conversation starter.)

Silence and hesitancy are normal in the early stages of a discussion. You may prepare the group for this by telling them it’s okay to take a moment to think of their response. Resist the temptation to jump in and break each period of silence. If the silence continues, you can ask or guess aloud about what it may mean. You can voice the fact that “it’s sometimes hard to be the first to respond.” By remembering to keep the discussion personal and informal, it helps to make participants feel more at ease. Once the group sees that the facilitator truly does not intend to lead, dominate, lecture or force opinions, members will begin to interact with one another.

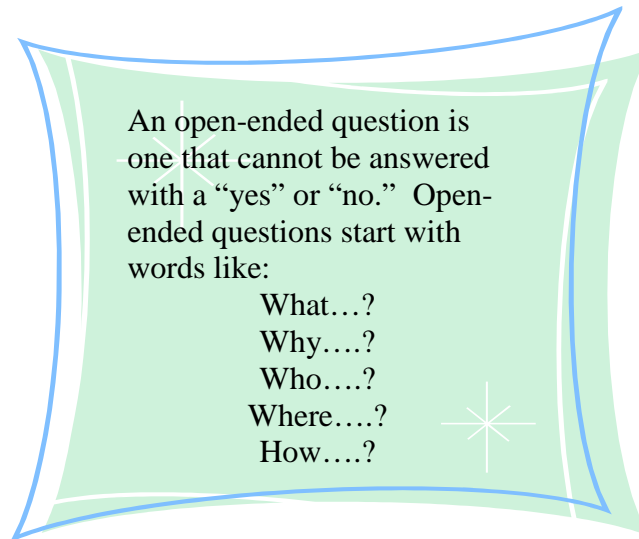
Often group members who are new to this style of group education will speak directly to the facilitator. The facilitator encourages group interaction by smiling and briefly looking *away* from the person speaking so that participants quickly get the idea and look to the other group members for a response. If no one speaks up, resist the temptation to jump in with a response, and instead, ask the group, “Any reaction to that, anyone?” or “Who would like to share their experience with this?” Looking away from a participant in this instance is purposeful and appropriate, whereas in other instances, making good eye contact is essential so that participants feel heard and attended to.

“You made me feel so welcome.” (WIC mom, North Country Children’s Clinic)

☀ **Share & Connect**

This is where the facilitator aims to gain more insight into the participants’ true feelings about a particular issue. Participants need to feel safe and comfortable enough to be honest and open, and recognize that they are not being judged. Group members are there to solve real problems, not just transfer knowledge. We want our participants to believe that their sharing in the group will help them and each other to achieve their desire to be better parents.

Ask open-ended questions that promote a connection to deeply held feelings that drive behaviors. Participants will feel that the desired behavior change is important because it speaks to their core values and will make them feel better about themselves. Keep the discussion going with probing questions and clarifying statements.



You can sometimes *overuse* questions during a session by relying on questions to add insignificant information, or replace silence. Help yourself to break this habit by reminding yourself, **"If I already know the answer, don't ask the question!"** Remember, this is a conversation, so participants should never feel as though they are being interrogated or lectured.

Take notice when you've asked a participant a few questions in a row and back off. Give the group a chance to think and respond. Remember to ask only one question at a time. Multiple questions in a row may overwhelm participants. They may not know which question to answer first.

Balance your use of open-ended questions with other facilitating skills such as clarifying or focusing. Clarifying encourages people to respond to your interpretation of their statements. Focus primarily on feelings or experiences. You can use various types of reflection, or say, *"Tell us more about that..."* Use these pulse points to emphasize the emotional benefits of behavior change: **Pride; Security; Happiness; and Hope for the future.**

Examples of open-ended questions:

How do you feel when your child eats his vegetable?

or

What is it like for you when the TV is on during mealtime?



Asking open-ended questions is a skill. It is one of the most fundamental skills a group facilitator needs. Open-ended questions will stimulate people to think and respond. There are no right or wrong answers to open-ended questions.

Encourage participation. Watch for signs that a participant wants to contribute. Group sessions are more interactive if seating is in a circle and comfortable (children can be playing on the floor

in the middle of the circle to help parents stay engaged in the discussion). Make sure all are included in the session and no one is seated outside the circle. Don't let others interrupt while a participant is sharing and always make sure to discourage side conversations. If someone asks you a question, **throw it back to the group members**, even if you know the answer. For example:

"That's a great question, Debbie. Who would like to share their experience with..."

Give the participants the opportunity to share and feel good that they have added value to the session. **Give yourself permission not to teach.** TLC sessions will be more effective as you train and discipline yourself to stay in the role of coach and not lecture the group. This takes practice so keep trying until you get it.

If a participant asks a question and other participants do not offer information or experiences, it is your role as facilitator to address it. Try a probing/clarifying question to get more information that may encourage others to respond. Or ask the group to help you brainstorm ideas. You may need to give some information/advice, but keep it brief and relevant. Return to group participation as soon as possible. Clarify that the information was helpful before moving on:

"Debbie, was this information helpful to you?"

If a participant expresses a concern or asks a question and is ignored, he/she no longer feels valued as a group member and will shut down, which can lead to a negative perception of the group process and experience. If appropriate, you may defer a question until after the group has ended. For example, if Debbie had stated that she needed a change to her food package, it is acceptable to reply in a friendly tone:

"Debbie, I can help you with food package changes after our session."

Remember to follow through after the group.

Be curious. Curiosity is the desire to learn more about a person or thing. When you have an agenda such as assuming you know something about a participant, or focusing on what you think they need to hear, your curiosity dries up. Not only that, you get a little bored. Curiosity is not attached to anything such as a hidden agenda. As you get more curious about what drives your participants' behaviors, participants will in turn get more curious about themselves. Feeling like you have to know something or get it right because you are the nutritionist turns off curiosity. Be curious about the person, not about the details or facts of their lives, stories or situations. For instance, when you ask a participant *"What are all the possibilities in your community for becoming more physically active?"* and continue probing in that direction, the focus is on the facts or details. Instead, asking *"What about becoming more physically active with your family is important to you?"* puts the focus on the person and what drives their behavior. **Now the participant has an opportunity to connect with the feelings that drive their behaviors.** Allow the group to take off from there.

Limit the use of "Why" questions. Although "why" is open-ended, "why" questions can put people on the defensive. They might respond with "I don't know" which adds nothing to the

conversation. It may also sound judgmental, so exercise caution when using them. Try to formulate your question without it and if you really feel the need to use “why,” be careful of your tone of voice to avoid sounding judgmental or threatening in any way.

Accept what people say. Learning is more effective when there is good, comfortable communication and an atmosphere of acceptance. We do not choose to feel particular feelings or emotions. Feelings just are. They are not right or wrong. A facilitator must accept and respect someone’s feelings without judgment or necessarily agreeing with their opinion or point of view. Keep the spirit positive. Do not overly praise ideas you like, or belittle those you dislike. This can hinder the group process. Group members may try to incorporate your preferences to please you so you will like them. On the other hand, you don’t want people to feel disappointed of, condescended to or cross-examined if you show a negative reaction to what was said.

“This appointment is fun and I really enjoyed meeting you. I don’t feel so embarrassed & nervous about coming to WIC.” (WIC mom, North Country Children’s Clinic)

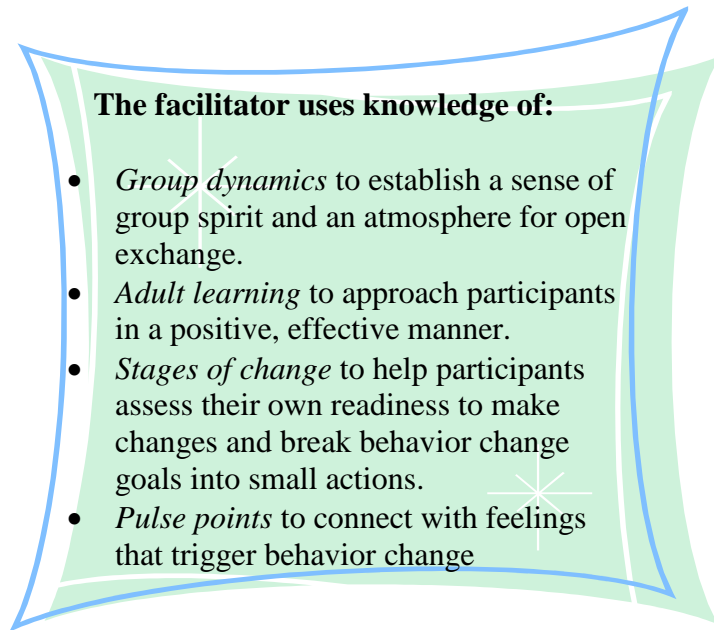
Facilitate; don’t teach. This is the hardest thing for many who have been in a teaching role most of their careers. You may wonder, *“But why did I go to school for nutrition if I am not going to teach people how to eat healthy?”* Trust that the value of the group will be realized by everyone present. You must give yourself permission not to teach and trust that positive messages will be expressed by the group. Facilitators understand the value of group decision-making, and see their role as helping the group get started, establishing a participant-centered climate, giving support to others, and keeping the group on track so that there is maximum benefit for the learners. While you may not need to use specific nutrition facts or details (i.e.: amounts of fat in various milk types) when facilitating you will be using your critical thinking, rapport building, and motivational interviewing skills.

Facilitating is listening and guiding the participants and sharing with the group. When a group member asks a direct question looking for nutrition information, your first response is to throw it back to the group. If the question remains unanswered, provide it yourself; correct myths and/or outdated practices in a gentle and respectful manner.

Remember to resist the temptation to fire questions at the participant to gather detailed information to solve the problem. **Turn the problem over to the group.** You might say, *“Does anyone else experience this?”* When the group’s input is exhausted and people are looking for answers, that is the time to ask their permission to offer your knowledge-based experience and suggestions.

Save your probing questions for when you want to help your participants connect with their feelings to resultant behaviors. Keep trying to connect feelings with the behaviors. Keep in mind that group dynamics are in play, unlike individual appointments, where your job might require more information gathering.

Trust that the conversation within the group will go where it needs to. This may be difficult to do at first, but experience will teach you how to meet your participants’ needs. You will feel



that you have made a difference when the group is over; and, in turn, feel more fulfilled in your work.

Learn from each other. Be real. You may share your own personal experience if you feel it is relevant and will contribute to the conversation. The facilitator is also learning from the participants. Share personal challenges briefly, yet honestly, when appropriate and only when it will benefit the group members. Remember to ask permission to share what you have learned from the group with others. This can be done with a simple question to the group at the conclusion of the session such as: "I would love to share your ideas with other families, would that be ok?"

"I wish I had brought my daughter. She would have loved this!"
(WIC mom at end of group)

☀ **Summarize & Act**

Summarizing brings ideas together. It is a great learning technique. Reviewing points allows participants to "save" the information in their brains. A facilitator can summarize when some main points have been made or when the group seems to have come to a conclusion.

At the end of a session, the facilitator must bring it all together by highlighting some of the points brought out during the conversation. Repeat the relevant information. This way the participants will see that their comments and shared experiences helped and were heard. It also creates an opportunity for the participants to get recognized for their contributions to the group and feel valued. Reviewing what has been discussed also helps give the session closure. Remember, summarizing at the end of the Talk, Listen, Connect session is the facilitator's responsibility.

Choosing to act leads to change. After summarizing, the facilitator asks the participants what they might take away from the conversation. This final piece will make the conversation relevant, meaningful and worthwhile on a personal level. This kind of sharing at the end of the session might also lead to any goal-setting that an individual may be considering.

For example:

We've shared lots of wonderful ideas today: (mention/summarize the ideas)

Then you might ask:

Would anyone like to share one thing new they learned or something they may do differently?

or

Is there anything you plan to do differently after our discussion today?

or

Based on what we heard today, what ideas might you take home and try with your family?

or

Is there something that was shared today that you will try this week?

As you ask participants to share, look around the room and notice if anyone seems ready to speak. Offer opportunities to speak, but do not force it. During this, “Act” piece of TLC, it is important to keep the tone conversational and not put participants on the spot for setting a goal for themselves. Keep it light and keep the conversation flowing. Your goal as facilitator is to create a safe space for participants to feel comfortable enough to state a goal, out loud, to the group, but not necessarily *have to* state a goal.

Always end on a high note. Keep it positive. Give it meaning. You might want to end the session by saying:

“I always learn something in these Talk, Listen, Connect sessions. Thank you for what you taught me today, and for coming and participating.”

Renew each participant’s sense of hope, allowing them to leave the WIC clinic inspired to change and with a clear path to success. Remind participants that they are powerful and that each small action they take can make a difference in their families. Affirm and make them feel successful; make them feel like they are great parents and caregivers.

Finally, follow up and assist participants who need additional information or if they asked for some material(s) such as handouts, references and/or referrals. This is also the time to help those who voiced a concern that was not fully addressed during the session.

Conclusion

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Have patience. Developing facilitation skills takes time. Believe you can do it. Take the initiative to start. And finally, brave it out and just do it!

After conducting a Talk, Listen, Connect session, ask yourself:

- How did it *feel* to facilitate?
- What did I find easy?
- What was the most challenging?
- Where are my strengths?
- What did I learn?
- What can I do differently?

Note: See Facilitator's Evaluation Form in Chapter 7.



Above All -- Have fun!!

- Remember that it takes time for a group to grow and develop trust.
- Be patient and never define success by the number of people attending the session.
- Enjoy yourself and the group members, and encourage them to do the same.

“Staff agrees that by having discussions after each clinic, we are able to change things that aren’t working and try new ideas. Each time we have a clinic it gets easier and staff is less stressed because they know that we are not expected to be perfect and it is getting easier.”

(Allegany County WIC Program Coordinator)

Chapter 2

Facilitator Tips



Facilitator Tips

But what if...

...I feel uncomfortable?

You may never have facilitated a group discussion and you may be uncomfortable about trying it. Comfort comes from practice.

- Think about at your readiness to facilitate Talk, Listen, Connect sessions in terms of stages of change. What stage are you in now? Contemplation—just thinking about it? Or are you in Preparation—making plans to do it? Perhaps you are already in Action, and are looking here for tips on how to do it differently.
- As you begin to conduct TLC sessions, you may want to have an outline or list of questions handy may help ease your mind. However, don't use these as a script. You want to maintain the flow of the conversation, and you won't be able to really listen and do that if you're thinking about asking the next question on your list. You don't have to ask these questions, but knowing that you have them to fall back on can help with your comfort level.
- Ask a colleague for help. Having another staff person sit in the group with you while you develop your facilitation skills may help with your confidence.
- Start with a familiar group or topic. If you feel particularly comfortable with a certain topic or group, start there and gradually expand to other topics and groups as your comfort level rises and you develop your facilitation skills.
- Always remember that the discussion is for your participants. If you get stuck just throw it back to the group, ask for others' feelings, opinions or experiences with the issue.
- Practice, practice, practice.

...my participants feel uncomfortable?

A good facilitator takes advantage of positive thinking and sets a positive tone for the session. A group is more open to sharing when there is a sense that the facilitator is comfortable and supportive. It is important to keep in mind that in a group setting, a participant's first concern is being accepted and acknowledged as worthy. New learning that takes place in the group is secondary.

A comfortable group has a good time and shares freely with each other. The group is highly interactive and time is up before they know it. An uncomfortable group sticks to safe topics and needs continual prodding to talk. These groups do not fully explore the topic and time drags.

- Always put the seats in a circle before the session. Due to room size, the circle might be more like an oval. Never try to do a TLC session like a class, where you are in the "teacher" position and the "students" face you in rows.
- Also, don't seat yourself in a "power" position in the circle. Before anyone else arrives, put your things in a chair that blends in with the others. If you seat yourself so that you are "in charge" of the circle, your group will relate to you

rather than with each other. Think carefully about where you will sit. Remember: you are the coach, not the “star of the show!”

- Tell them that this is *their* time to share and connect. You are there to serve as a guide. You may want to let the group know how long the session will last. (Then make sure to finish on time.)
- Let children read books, color, or play with quiet toys in the middle of the circle. Or, it may be helpful to have another staff member play with or read to the children in a corner of the room, if possible. (You might want to enlist a senior volunteer to help, or someone from the library or a reading-promotion program. Or perhaps another staff member can do a separate nutrition activity with the children in another room.)



Franklin County WIC Program

- A group that is uncomfortable may be reflecting your comfort level. The words you choose and your body language may help to put the group at ease. Remember to smile, thank them for coming, etc.

...the conversation isn't moving?

Drawing people out and getting them to *participate* in discussion can be a challenge. Here are tips that others have learned from their experience:

- Be sure it's clear from your introduction that this is *their* discussion group, not yours. Your role is to help *them* discuss and share what they know about the topic with each other.
- The *earlier* you give people the opportunity to participate, the more likely they are to participate. Also, the earlier they participate, the more *often* they will participate for the whole session.
- Rephrase your conversation starter to be more open-ended. If it still falls flat, have a back up conversation starter ready.
- An idea to get people talking right away: ask them to pair off in twos, starting at your left, and have each pair discuss your conversation starter for a minute or two. Then ask who will share with the group one thing that they discussed with

each other. Once participants have already said something to their partner, they will find it easier to say it another time to the group.

- Asking for examples is a powerful way of getting discussion going. Participants often find it easier to tell a story (of what their child does, for instance) than to speak in generalities.
- Ask, “*Does anybody here need the group’s ideas or support for something you’re trying to do now?*”
- Describe what you know to be a common situation in regard to your topic, like “*Mary has a 2 year old, Johnny, who refuses to eat; all he wants to do is drink all day.*” (Mary is a hypothetical or real participant, not necessarily in the group.) Then ask, “*From your experience, what would you tell Mary to help her with this?*” Get several ideas from the group. This should lead to a good discussion. (You can use or make up different scenarios appropriate to the topic you are discussing like eating in front of the television, for example.)
- Tell the group that you will read a few tips from a WIC nutrition handout that deals with your topic and you would like to hear examples from their own experience relating to a tip. Frequently, reading the tips will trigger thoughts and issues from participants, leading to a lively discussion.
- Ask a question and then ask people to raise their hands if they have an opinion about it. Most people have opinions. Then ask if anyone will share their opinion. If nobody wants to share their opinion, ask them what they think *your* opinion is! Then you can ask why they think that’s your opinion. That could start a fun discussion.
- Always say “thank you” for response to your direct questions, especially for the first few responses. Make sure the first few speakers are warmly thanked and feel “well-protected.” Everyone will notice how you treat them. If you handle the first responses warmly, you will set up an atmosphere of trust.
- Are you giving the participants a chance to contribute to the conversation? Consider your questions posed to the group, are they open- or close-ended? Are you asking several questions resulting perhaps in confusion about which one to answer? Are you allowing participants adequate time to respond? Moving too quickly from question to question or from topic to topic will block the natural flow of the session.
- Are you having an awkward silence? Give it a moment. Give participants the chance to fill a silence. That way, they share in the responsibility to make the session work. However, long silences are not productive and create an uncomfortable atmosphere.

...someone talks too much?

Sometimes talkative participants seem to monopolize a discussion. It can happen naturally, especially if others in the group are not talkative. Sometimes an overly talkative participant can take over the group and other participants become bored, passive or restless. The group is often waiting for you to turn the session back into a group discussion.



The most important rule is to be tactful. Keep in mind that all other participants in the group will experience the interaction vicariously. If one participant is embarrassed, all will feel embarrassed. The overly talkative participant is most likely just playing her role (discussing, participating) and has just gotten carried away. It happens to everybody once in a while.

You may actually give the talkative participant relief by interrupting and directing the conversation to others. Think to yourself, “I am doing the overly talkative person a favor by interrupting now.” If you choose to think of it that way, your interruption will be friendlier, warmer and more tactful. Some may talk a lot to feel important and raise their status in the group, and still others may feel insecure and want to make themselves feel understood.

With that in mind, here are some tips on how to deal with an overly talkative participant:

- Interrupt with a smile (always with a smile) and say something like: *“Betty, I’m sorry to interrupt, but it’s time to go on to my next question, which is....”*
- *“Betty, thanks for starting us down this path, you have really shared a lot of your experiences about xyz with us...but we are getting short on time and I want to make sure we all get to share, so now let’s go around the circle so everyone who wants to gets a chance to speak—you can say ‘I pass’ if you choose....”*
- *“I’m noticing others are stirring and wanting to talk.”* (Acknowledge, and look toward others).

Going around in a circle is typically not done when facilitating discussions, but in this case, it is used as a strategy for preventing one member from monopolizing the time and giving others a chance to speak. Start with the person next to the overly talkative person so that you can end with the person just before the overly talkative person. Then move on to a new subject. If the group is large, ask for very short responses, but give everyone a chance to speak.

...someone doesn’t talk at all?

People may be quiet for several reasons:

- Overly talkative speakers may intimidate them.
- They may like to think before they share.
- They may not see a natural opening to say what they want to.
- They don’t want to be seen as too pushy.
- They may want to check out the group before opening up.
- They may feel that their ideas are not worth sharing.
- The anxiety of speaking up may be too high to overcome without help.
- They just want the group to end.



In any case, as the facilitator, you will want to watch for body language or facial expressions that signal that a quiet person wants to speak. You could invite them to speak by saying, *“You look like you might be about to say something?”* or *“Was there something you wanted to share?”*

If a quiet person makes a move to talk, but someone else jumps in first, you can say, “Let’s go one at a time. Rita (quiet person), what would you like to share?”

How you respond to silent participants depends on your assessment of why you think they are quiet. Respond to nonverbal signals that they may want to speak. If silent members give a blank look, or keep their head down, don’t force them to speak. Move on.

...the topic of conversation goes way off track?

Tell the group that we’ve seemed to have veered off track, and then proceed to summarize what pertinent information was discussed so far. You can then ask another probing question about the original topic, or an open-ended question steering them back to a related topic. For example, if the conversation gets to be more about mother-in-laws, then it does about feeding their family, try and relate it back to the topic. For example, “*How does your mother-in-law being so demanding of your children get in the way of your ability to feed them in the way you feel is best?*”

...there are side conversations that interfere with the flow of the group?

Take care not to embarrass anyone by drawing attention to them. Perhaps their conversation is related to the topic, or it may be personal. If the side conversation is distracting to the group, you can call the talking member by name and ask an easy question to draw them back in. Like, “*Nicole, how old was Matthew when he started solid foods?*” or “*Patty, what finger foods does Tommy like to eat?*”

...I get stuck? or the conversation falls flat?



Don’t be afraid to ask the group for help. Brainstorming is a process many groups use to come up with lots of ideas in a short amount of time. The trick is to just keep tossing out ideas without getting into whether or not they are *good* ideas. People just say what comes to mind. Brainstorming can be a good way to change the energy level during a discussion. An added bonus: brainstorming can be a good way to get a few laughs when people feel comfortable enough to have some fun with it. Say, “*All ideas are welcome, even really wild or silly ones.*” In fact, crazy ideas can spur thinking in a new and creative direction that may produce action plans that otherwise might not have come to mind. “*We won’t analyze the ideas right now. Let’s just toss around ideas for a minute or two about how Lisa might handle this.*”

Somebody may need to jot down the main ideas during brainstorming. Then you can go back and look at the list and Lisa can say what she thinks are the ideas that could work for her. Other participants may have tried some of the ideas and can tell her more about how they worked.

If all else fails and you feel stuck, ask the group to suggest a new topic. *“It seems to me that this is not of great interest to any of you here today. Does anyone have anything they would like to discuss or know more about?”*

...there is misinformation shared?

As you know, there is a great deal of misinformation in the area of nutrition. As a facilitator, you will need to decide which minor points to let go and which ones should be addressed. Being tactful is important because if the participant feels badly, she may not speak up again, and others may be afraid to “say something wrong,” too.

There are many ways to handle misinformation, but the guiding principle is to respect the person’s feelings while you either solicit a different point of view from the group or offer a different point of view yourself. Try to see if someone in the group has a different view before offering one yourself. Ask, *“What do the rest of you think about that?”* Lots of times, the group will offer up alternatives and correct the misinformation.

For instance, a woman in a group of pregnant women says that she doesn’t want to gain more than 8 pounds. Instead of reacting, ask the group in a calm voice, *“What do the rest of you think about gaining 8 pounds during pregnancy?”* or *“What do the rest of you think could be some of the concerns with gaining a small amount of weight during pregnancy?”*

Here are some approaches that others have used to correct misinformation or misconceptions without embarrassing the participant:

- *“You’ve brought up an interesting issue. Has anyone had a different experience or different information?”*
- *“I am glad that worked for you. Other people have found that xyz worked better for them. Has anyone tried xyz?”*
- *“Well, I used to think that myself, and then I learned that...”*
- *“You have brought up a very interesting issue, and one that I have done some research on because lots of moms ask me about it. I’ve learned that....”*
- *“I wonder...would you have done anything differently if you had had the information we have talked about today?”*

Overall, the thing to remember is that putting down anybody’s ideas or experiences is to be avoided by you and the group. Don’t forget: one of the “Ground Rules” is that everyone’s thoughts and opinions about the topic are welcome. Another rule of thumb is if you feel you will lose sleep if the misinformation is not addressed, then by all means, skillfully address it. Many facilitators agree that most misinformation that comes up does not fit into this category.

...I do not know the answer?

Admitting that you do not know the answer to a question is an unsettling (maybe even scary) thought for many WIC staff members. As CPAs, nutritionists or RDs, we may feel that we are expected to know the answer to every possible nutrition-related question. The field of nutrition is vast and constantly changing with new and emerging research. It is important to stay up to date with current research and recommendations relevant to the issues faced by your WIC families.

If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to:

- remain calm;
- refrain from rambling or making something up;
- refrain from giving misinformation or outdated information;
- be honest, acknowledge that you do not know the answer;
- find the answer (e.g. defer to another staff person, look it up in a resource, make a referral); and,
- do not ignore the question.

Sample responses:

“That is a great question; I have never been asked that before. I want to make sure that you get the correct answer, so would it be okay if we go to my office (or check with other staff) after the group to find the answer?” (And make sure to do this after the group).

“There has been some new information/research on that topic and I want to make sure you get the correct answer. Can we look into that together after the group?”

“That is a great question for Marianne, our senior nutritionist (or breastfeeding coordinator). She has much more experience with this and would be able to help answer your question. She is here today. Would it be okay if, after the group, we talk to her about this?”

Remember, if you do not know the answer; know how to find the answer. For the most part, when some one asks you a question, they are looking for you to help them find the correct information.

...someone wants handouts?

Printed materials can be used in Talk, Listen, Connect sessions as a tool to stimulate discussion or as a resource, but printed materials should *not* be the focus of the TLC sessions. If a participant requests a handout during the group try to keep the flow of the conversation and get the handout at the end of the group. You might say *“I would be more than happy to get that information for you, would it be okay if we continued the discussion and after the group, I could get that material for you an any others that would like it?”* and then proceed.

If you are offering a handout, always give participants a choice of whether they want to keep any printed materials. This is a small point, but it shows respect for the participant’s ability to decide whether or not they want the information.

Hint: You may want to laminate the conversation starters. Use the laminated version to open your session, then have some handy should a participant show interest in having a copy.

...someone expresses strong emotion?

Emotion is not chosen, controlled or stopped. Feelings just **are**; unlike our thoughts and behaviors which we can mostly choose. So when a



participant expresses strong emotion, *respond* rather than react with your own feelings. It is important to respond with empathy and/or validation. Simply allow the participant the space to express her emotion without trying to change it. Ask her how she would like you and/or the group to be of help. Offer her a tissue if she is crying. If you sense the participant would benefit from obtaining some support in regard to her strong feelings, in private, after the session, offer her the help she needs (i.e. one-on-one counseling or a referral).

“I can see that this makes you sad/frustrated/angry.” (Reflect back what was just said)
“What would you like from me or from the others right now?” or
“How can I help?”

...participants disagree?

Participants may disagree with each other. While this will often lead to more energetic conversations, occasionally the facilitator may want to intercede. Remember that sometimes people who can't agree about details can agree on a concept or goal. For example: people don't agree on when to first offer cereal to babies. Redirect the conversation to the larger goal—protecting precious babies as they develop—and try to identify ways of doing this.

Occasionally a participant may be hostile, angry, confrontational, demanding or combative. The best way to deal with a hostile person is to dig deep within yourself and feel empathy for this person. Proceed with kindness, softly, slowly and respectfully talking with them. Don't force them to participate. Say something supportive like: *“It seems like this has been a frustrating day. I will do my best to make it better.”*



...a participant wants to leave/doesn't want to stay?

Many of us are hesitant to try something new and risk being uncomfortable. Some participants may have visions of old group education and classroom-style lectures and thus not want to attend a TLC session. Staff enthusiasm is vital for TLC to be well received. It is important that all WIC staff be familiar with TLC so they can explain that this is an opportunity to share with and learn from other participants (much different from classes). Reassure participants that this new style of group education is designed for parents to share and support each other. Sell it! Let the

mom know that other moms really like the TLC format. Its fun and interesting, and all about *them*! No more lectures!

A warm welcome to the group and sincere rapport building is crucial to making everyone feel at ease. If a participant expresses wanting to leave, don't assume the reason. It may be she's really uncomfortable, or it may be another person in the room, or she needs to get to work and she thinks it will take a long time. Inquire as to what the issue might be and offer to help if you can. Tell her that you are sorry that she can't stay now, but that you hope she will next time because other participants really seem to like the discussions. Remain gracious, respectful and non-judgmental.

As an agency, it's important to decide what the options are for those participants who do not want to attend a TLC session, as well as for those who show up too late to join the group already in progress. Staff should discuss together what the plan should be.

For example:

- Will the participant be seen by another CPA while the group is in session?
- Will the participant be seen by the TLC facilitator after the group is over?
- Will the participant be encouraged to reschedule the appointment?
- Will the participant wait until the next TLC session?

Chapter 3

Conversation Starters



Conversation Starters

Conversation starters are tools that help participants get involved right away, feel more comfortable with one another, and set a friendly, fun, sharing tone for the group. TLC sessions start with provocative questions, activities or stories that lead to emotion-based conversations, not to an immediate transfer of knowledge. The goal is to hook the participant, and have them engage in the conversation and ultimately leave the clinic feeling valued, confident and successful.

You want to allow your participants to begin to think about a particular topic in an emotional way. This is how you can target the authentic core person rather than remain at a superficial level. You want your participants to feel that there is a real heart and soul that drives WIC services. In the end, you want your participants to connect the desired behaviors with their core values and a greater sense of well-being. You want them to think positively about behavior change and to feel good about their decisions and themselves.

Here are some examples of some opening questions (conversation starters) you might use depending upon your audience:

- *What surprised you most about being a parent?*
- *What's one thing your parents did for you that you hope to do for your child?*
- *If there is one thing you would like your child to remember about family meals, what would it be?*
- *If you had one piece of advice for a new mother, what would it be?*
- *Which one of these faces (face expression cards) reflects how you feel about the way your child eats?*
- *Pick a paint swatch that reminds you of your child's favorite food.*
- *How does your physical activity today with your children make you feel about your children's future?*

It's fun to sometimes read an excerpt from a news article, and then ask the group how they feel about what they just heard. For example, you could read off a quote from the newspaper:

"This quote came from an article in the Daily News today, called Nine Ways Food Labels Mislead the Consumer:

"Research from Cornell University has shown that people tend to eat up to 50% more calories when they eat low-fat snack foods, compared with eating the original". (It also showed," many foods labeled as low-fat have only 30% fewer calories".)

How does it make you feel about the foods you buy?

This could lead to a discussion about other labeling issues, like light juices with water, artificial sweeteners and fillers, or vitamin waters. It leaves the subject broad enough to capture the interest of group members, but does not limit it so that it feels to participants like the facilitator has a focused agenda of her own.

The conversation starter may focus on a specific topic area, and then the discussion may evolve into something slightly different. Don't worry. *Trust* that the conversation goes where it needs to. If the conversation veers WAY off track, it is your role as the facilitator to bring it back to a WIC-related subject. Here are some examples of things you could say to steer the conversation back on track:

"How does _____ relate to you feeding your baby/child/family?"

or

"This is a really good discussion, and you might like to continue after the session. For now, let's get back to what we were talking about _____."

A good conversation starter will focus on a topic without being too narrow. For example:

"I heard/read a report/article this week about the risk of eating tuna during pregnancy due to the mercury content. It is recommended to limit tuna intake during pregnancy. How does this make you feel?"

A potential (and predicted) response to this very narrow question might be:

"I don't eat fish."

At this point, there isn't much of a discussion left to be had regarding tuna consumption during pregnancy. A broader question that would generate more response may be:

"With all the things that occur during pregnancy (morning sickness, cravings, etc), how have your eating habits changed (or how did your eating habits change during pregnancy)?"

The potential responses to this question can be varied and could lead the discussion in a number of directions that would be relevant and of interest to the participants, far beyond the topic of tuna.

Practicing your conversation starters will help you develop your facilitation skills. Spend 5-10 minutes of your staff meetings practicing conversation starters in small groups. Working with your colleagues provides a nonthreatening environment for you to try different wording or phrasing. This also allows for feedback and collaboration. Share with each other the conversation starters that worked well and those that did not. Brainstorm ideas to improve those that have not worked as well.

Keep in mind that a basic skill necessary for developing and using conversation starters successfully is the ability to formulate and use open-ended questions. Here are sample open-ended questions that may help you start and keep the conversations flowing.

Introduction Phrases

- *What concerns do people have about...?*
- *How do you feel about...?*
- *What have you heard about...?*
- *What's your biggest fear about...?*

Transition Phrases

- *What things have you tried...?*
- *What ideas haven't worked...?*
- *What ideas have worked...?*
- *Why do you think that's a concern...?*
- *If you made a change, how would that affect...?*
- Reflect on comments (paraphrase).

Closing Phrases

- *What is one thing you could take away with you today?*
- *What ideas have you heard that might work for you?*
- *What would you do differently now?*

The conversation starters on pages 32-55 are emotion-based handouts that were developed for TLC sessions. The pictures and content are focused on pulse points and relate topic information through stories of participants' experiences. You may use these to start your conversations and/or as optional handouts after a group session.

GREATEST show on earth



#3971: (Role modeling)

What are the key messages?

- Embrace the joys of parenting.
- Children need and want to be with their parents.
- Parents are role models for their children.
- Being active together is a great way to spend more time with your children.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- Suppose a pregnant woman asked you for advice on raising children. What advice would you share with her? (Allow time for reflection and sharing.)
- (Show picture on handout to the group.) Everyday, children are watching their parents, hoping to be exactly like them. It is humbling and amazing to realize the power parents have to change or impact their children. To your child, you are the greatest show on earth. How does knowing that you are the center of your child's universe make you feel?
- What positive habits do you hope your children will learn from you?

Share and Connect:

- How important do you feel it is for your child to learn the joy of being active?
- What special gifts/memories related to eating or activity would you like to give your child?
- How can parents moderate TV time to leave more time for having fun as a family?
- Parents tell me that family activities that appear simple and common—like taking a walk together or eating as a family—have important emotional and health benefits. What emotional benefits do children get from being active as a family? What emotional benefits do children get from eating together as a family?
- How would your child's life be better if she learned to love being active? How would your child's life be different if he developed a life-long love of fruits and vegetables?

- How would you feel as a parent if your child grew up to be an active, fit, healthy and happy adult because of what you did today?

Summarize and Act:

- What will you do this week to be the greatest show on earth for your child?
- What will you do this week to help your child?

Balance takes practice



#3962: (Fast food)

What are the key messages?

- Fast foods are “sometimes” foods.
- Children grow best when offered “everyday” foods often.
- Parents can balance “sometime” fast foods with “everyday” foods.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- Let’s do a fill in the blank game. I’ll read the first half of the sentence; you fill in the second half.
 - When I cook meals at home for my children, I feel _____.
 - When I order milk instead of soda for my children, I feel _____.
 - When I give my children fruit instead of sweet desserts, I feel _____.
 - When I give my children vegetables instead of French fries, I feel _____.

Share and Connect:

- How do you feel when your family eats a meal together?
- What is it like for you when your children beg for something like fast food meals (and the fun prizes that often accompany them), especially when their friends have them regularly?
- Fast foods have become part of many busy families. How can busy parents balance the convenience and fun of fast foods—“sometime foods”—with the “everyday foods” like fruit, vegetables and low-fat milk that children need?

Sample responses:

- Order milk instead of soda at fast food restaurants.
- Order a small instead of a large French fries.
- Share a small French fries between children.

- Order apple slices or other healthy option instead of French fries.
- Take hamburger and fries home to have with milk and fruits/vegetables.
- Pick one night a week for fast food eating and eat at home on other nights.
- Go to fast food restaurants that feature playlands so children can burn up extra calories in active play.

Imagine that a young child—about four years old—and his mother are at a fast food restaurant. He asks for a hamburger, soda and large French fries. Mom smiles and orders a hamburger, milk and apples. The boy protests. Mom explains that she loves him very much and wants the best for him. Children have an amazing ability to learn lessons from parents. What lessons might this young child learn from a mother who insists that her child drink milk instead of soda, and eat apples instead of French fries?

Sample responses:

- Mom cares very much about me and is willing to stand up to my protests because she wants the best for me. I may not tell mom, but I like knowing that she cares for me.
 - Mom is fun. She lets us eat out at fun fast food restaurants, but makes sure we are eating foods that are good for us. She thinks about everything because she is a great mom!
 - Mom knows what is best for me.
- It is important to do what is right, even if it doesn't feel good at the moment.
 - We started with a fill-in-the-blank activity. Let's end with one, but with a new twist:
 - When I give my child a love of milk instead of soda, I will feel_____.
 - When I give my children a desire for fruit instead of sweet desserts, I will feel_____.
 - When I give my children a love of vegetables instead of an obsession for French fries, I will feel_____.

Summarize and Act:

- What will you do next time you go to a fast food restaurant to keep the balance?
- If you do eat more fast food than you think you should, what fun things can you do with your family to balance it out?

Resist the food fights



#3935: (Picky eating)

What are the key messages?

- Children will stop insisting on the same foods over and over if parents ignore their demands.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers of children who want to eat only one food item meal after meal.
- Parents/caregivers of children who are fussy or picky eaters.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- Do you remember any foods that you wanted to eat all the time when you were little? What were they?
- Have any of your children insisted on the same food over and over? How does this make you feel?

Idea for a group:

Let's start with the story of two moms. Both mothers face the same challenge but choose to handle it in different ways. Hear how mother #1 handles a child who insists on eating only one food item meal after meal. The children in this story love peanut butter sandwiches and insist on eating them every meal for weeks. Here is how Mother #1 handles the situation: (Read the following story.)

Story #1

Child (C) /Mother (M)

- C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
- M: You had a peanut butter sandwich for breakfast today and for every meal yesterday. You're getting grilled cheese instead.
- C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
- M: I said no. Didn't you hear me?
- C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
- M: Eating the same food everyday for all three meals is not healthy. You need to eat the foods I give you.

C: I won't eat anything but a peanut butter sandwich.
M: Then you'll go straight to your room.
C: I want a peanut butter sandwich. I won't eat anything else.
M: OK, I will give you a peanut butter sandwich. But you have to eat something different at dinner.

- How do you think this mom feels about her situation?
- What do you think will happen at the next meal with this mother and child?
What should the mother have done differently?
- Now, let's see how a different mother handled the same situation. (Read the following story.)

Story #2

Child /Mother

C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
M: I know you love peanut butter, but doesn't this look good? I made this yummy grilled cheese sandwich...and I have these delicious apple slices.
C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
M: I'll put your grilled cheese sandwiches and apples here. I bet the apple slices would taste great dipped in peanut butter.
C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
M: Why don't you try what you have on your plate? If you don't like it, you don't have to finish it.
C: I want a peanut butter sandwich. (Ignores demand.)
I want a peanut butter sandwich.
M: Sister Sally, you seem to really like those apple slices. Does the grilled cheese taste good?
C: I want a peanut butter sandwich.
M: Let's go to the park and play a little while. I'll let you climb the slide by yourself today.

- How do you think this mom feels about her situation?
- What did Mother #2 do differently to handle the same situation? How do you feel about how she handled this situation?
- Which child will likely be willing to try a different food at the next meal? Why?

Sample responses:

- Behaviors that get attention continue.
- Behaviors that are ignored stop.
- Positive attention to the desired behavior helps end the negative behaviors.
- Mother acknowledges and praises Sally for trying new foods.
- The child was trying to show his independence and the mother provided another way of being independent. (Allowing the child to climb the slide by himself at the park.)

Share and Connect:

- How will you feel when your child tries a new food that you've been offering for a while? And likes it?
- What are a parent's responsibilities when faced with a picky eater?
- What is it like for you when your child is picky?
- What are some ways that parents can get children to try new foods?

Sample responses:

- Encourage, but don't force, kids to try new foods.
 - Offer new foods alongside favorite foods.
 - Offer a small amount of each food on the plate.
 - Keep trying...children's preferences change over time.
- What may happen when parents ignore a problem behavior—like demanding the same food over and over?

Sample responses:

- The behavior may get worse before it gets better. The child is accustomed to getting attention for the behavior and may temporarily increase it before eventually decreasing it.
 - Eventually, the behavior goes away when attention to it ceases.
- Why do children ask for the same foods over and over?
 - Why is it a good idea to not make a big deal out of picky eating?
 - Children have little control over their lives. The food they eat may be one thing that they can control. What can you do to allow a child to have a part in deciding what to eat?

Summarize & Act:

- Which behaviors will you give positive attention to this week?
- Which behaviors will you ignore this week?
- What is one thing you'll try this week to introduce a new food to your child?

I not only became a mom, I discovered a new me



#3956: (Teenage pregnancy/breastfeeding)

What are the key messages?

- Motherhood changes everything. Bonding with your baby changes you in a powerful way that inspires you to be the best you can be.
- Breastfeeding may seem impossible until you gaze into your baby's eyes for the first time.
- Give breastfeeding a try.
- Breastfeeding is the normal method to feed an infant.

Who should receive these messages?

- Pregnant teenagers and their partners/support people.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- We all learn something new about ourselves almost everyday. What have you learned about yourself in the past months that has caught you by surprise? Delighted you? Made you proud of yourself?
- In what ways are you stronger than you thought?
- How do you feel about the way you have changed?

Share and Connect:

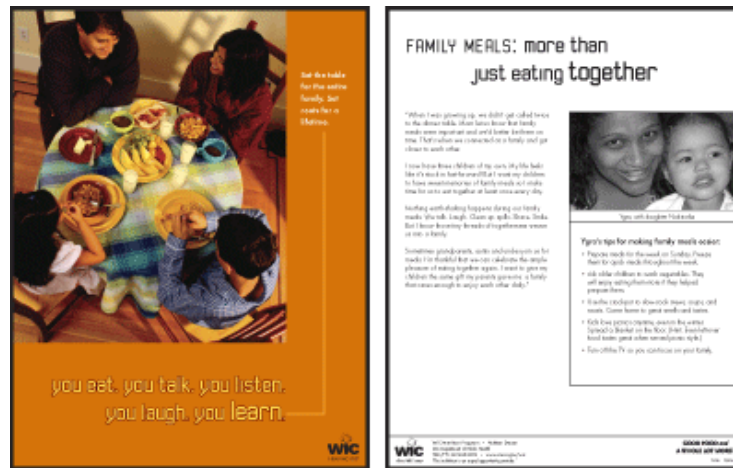
- What things about motherhood worry you?
- What things do you feel confident about?
- What feelings or thoughts do you have about feeding your new baby?
- How do you feel when you see a mom breastfeeding her baby?
- Some people feel breastfeeding is a gift a mother gives her baby, but mothers who breastfeed feel that the baby gives *them* the gift. How do you feel about breastfeeding?
- How might breastfeeding change you and your baby? (Affirm all feelings.)
- How might your life be more complicated if you do not breastfeed your baby?

- How might your baby's life be impacted if you formula feed?

Summarize and Act:

- How can you focus on breastfeeding as a way to bond with your miracle?
- What will you have to do now to be ready for breastfeeding when your baby arrives?
- What people will you need to tell about your plan to breastfeed?
- Who will support you and your decision?
- What will you say to influence others to support you in your breastfeeding decision?

You eat. You talk. You listen....



#3950: Set the table (Family meals)

What are key messages?

- Family meals provide emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual nourishment.
- Family meals connect families in a powerful way.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- What memories of family mealtime do you have from your childhood?
- What about eating together as a family is important to you?
- What is mealtime like for you?
- Describe your ideal mealtime with your family. What is one thing you could do to get closer to that vision?
- Suppose I could take out a prescription pad and write a prescription for something that would help protect your family. Would you be interested?
- (Show handout) The prescription I would write would be this: Eat meals together as a family. Eating together gives you and your children a sense of belonging, a connection that allows them to be strong when challenged.

Idea for a group:

- Have any of you played “Fly-on-the-Wall” before? It’s a fun game. Ready to play? Imagine you were a “Fly-on-the-Wall” during your most recent mealtime with your family. A fly-on-the-wall has a way of getting around and seeing things you might not see when you’re involved in a certain situation. What would you see or hear during mealtimes at your home?

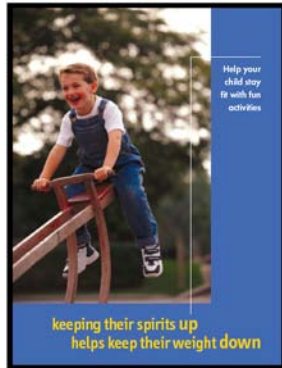
Share and Connect:

- How can busy parents find time to sit down and eat together with their families?
- What makes it difficult for your family to eat together?
- What can parents say and do at meals that give everyone, even babies, a chance to connect?
- Family meals can be stressful or fun in a busy day. What can parents do to make them peaceful, fun experiences for all?
- What memories of your family meals do you hope your children will cherish?
- Are there rituals or traditions that you could start today that might be something they will share with *their* children?
- What are some things that children can learn from family meals?
- How do you feel, as a parent, after connecting with your child in a powerful way?

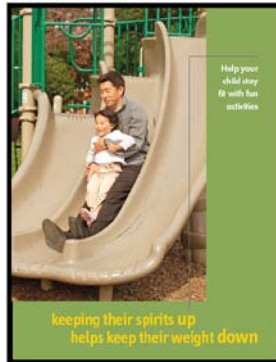
Summarize and Act:

- Simply eating together as a family could actually change the direction of your child's and your family's life.
- What's for dinner at your house this week and who will be enjoying it with you?
- What are some things you can do this week to make eating together possible?
- What can you do to your schedule to make family meals more frequent?

Keeping their spirits up helps keep their weight down



#3965: Seesaw



#3990: Dad on Slide
(Healthy childhood weight)



What are the key messages?

- Active play helps children keep fit.
- Parents help children develop a love for active play.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers.
- Parents concerned about their child's weight.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- Parents constantly struggle to provide what their children need. What do you think are the key things children need to be happy and healthy throughout life?
- What do you do to spend time with your child? How do you think spending time together benefits you and your child?

Share and Connect:

- You don't have to spend much time with toddlers to know they are often born with a love of being active. Why do some children become less active as they get older?

Sample responses:

- Limited space for active play.
 - Unsafe neighborhoods for children to play outside.
 - Elimination of playground time at child care centers and schools.
 - Parents are too busy to take children to parks and open play areas.
 - More TV and computer/video time.
- Television and computers occupy children so parents can get work done. What would it be like for you if your child watched less TV?

- Parents know to love their child and make them feel secure, valuable and trusting. They also know what foods grow healthy children, but what can parents do to help their children develop a love of being active?

Sample responses:

- Be active with them.
 - Make wonderful memories of being active together so activity is associated with positive memories.
 - Be a good role model.
 - Let them know that you crave the great feeling that comes with being active.
 - Establish family traditions around activity like a nightly walk around the block.
 - Take daily walks after dinner where families share values and dreams.
 - Take children to parks and areas where they can run.
- What kinds of physical activities do you do with your children (indoor and outdoor)?
 - How will *your child's life* be better if he has a love of being active and it continues throughout his life?
 - How will *your life* be better if you have a love of being active and it continues throughout your life?
 - How will you feel when you and your child can enjoy being active together?

Summarize and Act:

- What will you and your child do this week to be active together?
- If the weather or a busy schedule gets in your way of being active with your child this week, what will you do?

The vegetables are bound to find her mouth...



#3968: (Introducing vegetables)

What are the key messages?

- Getting children to develop a love of vegetables takes time.
- Successful parents keep trying.

Who should receive these messages?

- Parents/caregivers, especially those whose children don't like vegetables.

How can these messages be used in TLC?

Open:

- Tell me about some successes you've had in your life. Has there been a time when you weren't successful at first, but you did eventually succeed? How did that feel?
- Tell me about a success you've had with your child that you never thought you could achieve. How hard was it at the beginning? How did it feel to be successful?

Share and Connect:

- What would make you feel successful about feeding your child fruits and vegetables?
- What are some of the barriers that keep you from reaching your goal of having your children love vegetables?
- What are important lessons that parents teach toddlers and young children that require continued attention and reinforcement over time?

Sample responses:

- Teaching them to say “please” and “thank you.”
- Teaching them to keep their fingers out of electrical circuits.
- Teaching them not to hit.

- What do you do when the child doesn't understand the lesson the first time?
- How do you stay focused on your goals if you do not achieve them right away?

- When your child understands the lesson, how do you feel about yourself as a parent?
- How is getting your child to love vegetables an important life lesson?
- How will you feel when your child loves vegetables?

Summarize and Act:

- What is one idea you have to get your child to eat more fruits and vegetables this week?
- What will you say to yourself if your child chooses not to eat his vegetables this week?
- What positive words could you say to yourself to keep trying and not give up?

Follow the Leader

What is the key message?

- Parents are influential for children, especially in forming eating and activity habits.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Open:

- Ask participants to put their right hand out to the side and their thumb and forefinger together. (You do the same.) Direct them to put their hand on their chin while you put your hand to your ear. Most people will follow your actions rather than your words.

Share and Connect:

- Ask parents if they think children learn more from observing or listening to their parents. As illustrated in the opening activity, most people follow actions instead of words. Assure them that they are their child's number one teacher. Studies show that children and parents tend to eat the same types of food and have similar activity levels.
- Ask parents to generate a list of "best eating practices" for parents and children. Write their suggestions on a flip chart. Next, ask them to suggest "best activity practices" for parents and children.
- Ask parents to share one thing they are doing and one thing they would like to do from the best practice list. Next shift to things they would like to change about themselves so that their children can catch them in the act of modeling good choices. Ask parents to share tips on how best to achieve that "best practice."

Summarize and Act:

- Ask parents to consider what they can do today that will allow their child to have a better tomorrow.



Color Samples/Paint Chips

What is the key message?

- Understanding our feelings can help us learn to deal with a difficult situation.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Supplies: Various color samples/paint chip cards from a paint store. The more different colors you have the better the activity works.

Open:

- Ask participants to choose a color that represents how they feel about a certain topic, such as:
Pick a color that shows how you feel about your child's vegetable intake.
or
The topic of feeding children or family mealtime creates a range of feelings in everyone. Pick a color that shows how you feel about that part of parenting right now.

Share and Connect:

- Ask the participants to share the color sample/paint chip that they selected and what emotion that color represents.
- What makes you feel that way?
- What keeps you from feeling better about what you're doing?
- That is a common feeling on this topic. What would turn that emotion into pride?
- If you could change one thing in order to change that feeling, what would it be?

Summarize and Act:

- Ask the participants to share one action they will try during the coming days to feel better about the challenge presented.



It's in the Bag

What is the key message?

- Understanding our feelings can help us learn to deal with a difficult situation.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Supplies: One bag for each participant

Each bag has 5-10 pieces of fabric; each fabric has a different texture.

Open:

- Give each participant a bag with fabric samples. Without looking in the bag, ask them to find a fabric sample that tells something about how they feel about a general topic.
Find a fabric sample that tells something about how you feel about getting your child to eat vegetables.
or
Choose a fabric sample that relates to how you feel about your child watching television.
- Allow enough time for each person to select a fabric sample – about a minute.
- Ask each person to share their fabric sample and what it says about their feelings or perceptions related to the topic.
- Facilitator hint: it may help to jot down their responses as they share them for later reference.
- If there is a common thread among the responses, start with that feeling, perception or barrier. Ask other participants to share success tips related to the topic.

Summarize and Act:

- Summarize with “best practice” advice, as generated by the group.
- Ask participants to share something they heard today that they would be willing to try with their child/family. Offer materials related to the discussion (collect bags as participants leave).



Agree or Disagree?

What is the key message?

- People's perceptions can be barriers to change.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Supplies: Index cards

Pens

Flip chart



Example of quotes to write on cards:

- “I can’t afford to give my children vegetables they don’t like. If they don’t eat it once or twice, I don’t make it again.”
- “Young children can’t be overweight. They will grow into their right size. Besides, everyone in my family is overweight.”
- “There’s nothing I can do about my child’s weight. She was born big and will always be big.” “It doesn’t hurt a child to stay on a bottle until two or three years. After all, my mother did it for me and I turned out OK.”
- “Giving babies cereal in the bottle saves time and mess.”
- “Children are naturally active. Parents don’t have to do anything to encourage them to be more active.”
- “TV teaches children lots of good things. Besides, what’s a mother to do? TV is a perfect babysitter.”
- “Juice is good for kids. It’s silly to think juice can cause damage to a child’s teeth.”
- “French fries are a good vegetable for kids. They’re easy to eat and fit neatly into their hands.”
- “Society today is too worried about weight. A few extra pounds on a child doesn’t make any difference.”
- “Good moms allow children to determine how much they should eat without pressure or comment.”
- “I do everything I can to please my picky eater. I don’t want her to starve!”
- “Breastfeeding past three months!? No way – I don’t want my breasts to sag.”
- “The best way to get a child to sleep through the night is to give them juice or milk in a bottle.”

Open:

****The facilitator must be mindful of and sensitive to literacy levels, language issues and cultural beliefs and practices.****

- Tell participants that you collected quotes from other mothers and have written them on cards. Pass the cards around the group and ask them to take one or two.

Share and Connect:

- Ask the participants to read the cards and share their thoughts (or questions) on the quote.
What makes you agree or disagree with that statement? Does anyone have a different opinion?
or
Does the action on the card represent a “best practice” for today’s health-conscious parent?

Summarize and Act:

- Ask participants to select one action they plan to take today based on the discussion.
- Ask them to share it with the group, as desired.

Feeling Cards

What is the key message?

Identifying and discussing how people feel about a topic may uncover barriers to change.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Supplies: One set of Feeling Cards

Open:

- Place one set of feeling cards on a table. As participants arrive, ask them to choose one (or two) card(s) that represents how they feel about a general topic. Note: The Feeling Cards can be identified by the feeling (happy, concerned, puzzled, etc) or by number.

Examples:

Pick a card that shows how you feel about making evening meals.

or

The topic of feeding children creates a range of feelings in everyone. Pick a card that shows how you feel about that part of mothering right now.

Share and Connect

- Ask participants to share the feeling card they selected. Hold up the Feeling Card as they identify their emotion. It may be helpful to jot their responses down for later reference.
- After they identify their feeling, prompt discussion with questions like:
 - *What makes you feel that way?*
 - *What keeps you from feeling better about what you're doing?*
 - *That's a common feeling on this. What would transform that emotion into pride?*
 - *If you could change one thing in order to change that feeling, what would it be?*

Summarize and Act:

- Ask each person to share one action they will try during the coming days to feel better about the challenge presented.



Fly on the Wall

What is the key message?

- Looking at an issue/problem from a different perspective may provide insight into the issue/problem.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Supplies: Fly, optional prop

Open

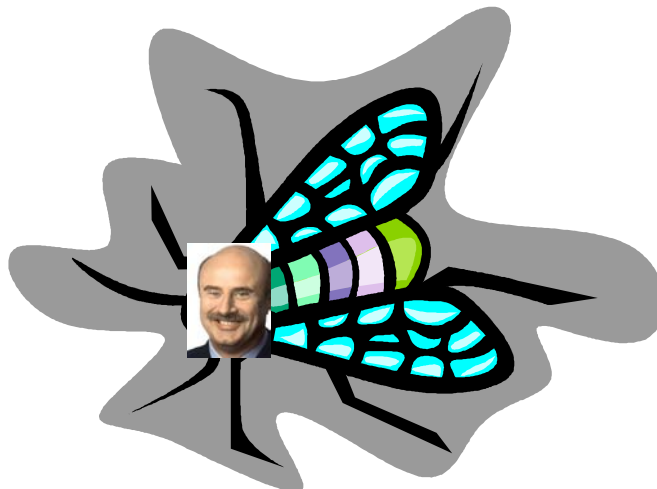
- Explain that parenting can be an exhausting, emotional experience. Sometimes it helps to become a “fly on the wall” and see it from a different perspective.
- Ask group members to imagine they were a “fly on the wall” during their last mealtime together. Explain that flies have a way of getting around and seeing things that few people ever see.

Share and Connect:

- What would the fly have seen at your mealtime together?
- Suppose the fly’s name was “Dr. Phil Fly.” What would Dr. Phil Fly recommend you do to connect your family closer together?
- What conversation starters work for you and your family?
- What mealtime memories do you hope your child will take and establish as traditions with their children?
- Dr. Phil Fly noticed the following feelings on his travels:
 - Frustration: Children refuse to eat, refuse to eat certain foods, spill, or food fights.
 - Loneliness: The other parent is missing so it doesn’t feel like family time.
 - Worried: Child may not eat enough and will starve.
 - Anger: Prepared meal and no one ate it.
- Do any of you ever have these feelings? What makes the situation better?

Summarize and Act:

- Ask participants to choose one or two things they plan to do to make mealtime special and change the course of their child’s life.



Grow a Healthy Child

What is the key message?

Parents have a direct influence on their children's weight.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Optional Supplies: Flower in a pot, watering can and "Grow a Healthy Child" handout

Open:

- Is anyone a gardener in the group? What types of things do you need to do to get this flower to grow?
- How do you help your children grow? What type of things do children need to grow healthy and strong? (Record responses—optional)
- Ask: What kind of healthy behaviors do you want your child to have in 20 years? (Record responses—optional)
- What are things we can do today to make that happen?
- Like a flower can be over-watered, a child can eat too much food. What are some foods that you can offer your child today that might help them have a healthier tomorrow?

Summarize and Act:

- Offer the handout and show the moms the tips on the back.



Folding Arms

What are the key messages?

- Making changes can be difficult and may require focus and practice.
- Old habits are hard to break.

How can this message be used in TLC?

Open:

- Ask participants to put down anything they are holding and fold their arms. (Facilitator should do the same)
- Point out that people do it differently. Some have one arm up, the other arm down or both arms up or down.
- Ask them to take their arms apart and fold them again, but in the opposite way than they did initially.

Share and Connect:

- Ask them to share how it feels to have their arms folded differently.
- Explain that changing the way we do things can feel awkward at first. Ask them what changes they might make this week that feel awkward at first, but become comfortable and natural over time.
- Ask participants to share “first steps” they might take in making the change, as well as how they might feel once they take that step.
- If time permits, encourage participants to share success stories about changes they made to better their child’s life. Prompt them to share their feelings related to the changes with phrases like,

“Did your success change the way you felt about yourself as a mom?”

or

“How do you think that small action will change your child’s life over time?”

Summarize and Act:

- What will you do differently next time you are trying to make a change?



Chapter 4

Icebreakers



Icebreakers

Icebreakers are activities that can be used instead of, or with, a conversation starter. An icebreaker sends the message that the WIC participants will be playing an active role in the session. They can help a nervous facilitator feel more at ease. In your introduction, explain to participants that you want to begin with a fun opening activity. There are lots of things you can do. Even though such an activity takes up some time, it is good to spend at least some time getting people comfortable and feeling like a cohesive group.

You can use these ideas or develop your own that reflect your creativity and your familiarity with your participants. Have fun!

Some ideas for icebreakers:

- For fun, put on some fast music and do a little “chair dancing” which means the group sits in their chairs doing some stretching and “dancing” following your lead. (For a demonstration, see the WIC “Fit Kids” video teleconference tape.)
- Ask people to introduce themselves and say how many years they have been a parent. If you have children, start with yourself. Keep track of the number of years and add them up. You will find that there is an impressive number of years of experience in every group!
- Say, “I know it’s hard sometimes to be the first one to speak, so I’m going to ask a question *everybody* here has an opinion on, I’m sure, and I just want you to answer it for a minute or two with your learning partner.”

(Their learning partner will be someone sitting beside them. It is best to turn to your left and say “Why don’t you count off 1, 2, 1, 2...and ones and twos will be learning partners.” If there is a person left at the end, she can be a learning partner with you, or she can join the previous two partners and become a threesome.)

- Ask each person to match up with another participant they don’t know and interview each other for 1 minute each. Interview questions could vary from group to group, and could include information related to the topic of the day. For instance, in a Talk, Listen, Connect session on feeding young children, you could ask them to include their name, their children’s ages, and their feeding or nutrition concerns. After one minute, announce it’s time to switch roles and go for another minute. Then have them introduce each other to the whole group. If there is a person without a partner, you can partner with them and introduce them to the group. It might help if your introduction goes first, to show people what you expect them to do. Keep it short so this icebreaker doesn’t take up too much time!
- In a group of parents with infants, ask each person to introduce herself and describe her baby...name, age, and personality, perhaps. You might be able to use these descriptions to provide an introduction to the first topic, such as crying, colic, or feeding concerns.

Chapter 5

Logistics/Staffing/WICSIS Instructions



Tips for Processing Talk, Listen, Connect

Each local agency has a clinic flow that best suits each site's needs. TLC groups can be arranged to fit the specifics of the clinic. What works at one site may not work at another site even within the same agency. It is important to remain flexible and try various timing and staffing arrangements to see what works best for your site. Seek assistance from your regional office and other LAs doing TLC groups.

Things to consider when planning Talk, Listen, Connect sessions:

Clinic Flow

- Number of staff
- Number of participants scheduled for secondary nutrition education (to determine how many groups will be needed)
- Number of participants attending the group
- Staff person(s) who will roster the group members (Receptionist, Clerk, Nutrition Assistant or CPA)
- Staff person(s) who will tailor and authorize the food package (Nutrition Assistant or CPA)
- Determine the ideal amount of time participants are in the clinic
- Determine where the groups will be held at the clinic site

Group Components

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| • Participant categories | Can be category-specific; works well when mixed. |
| • Content/topic of the group | The sky's the limit! Be creative. |
| • Preparation time | Variable. |
| • Commitment of staff | Recipe for success. |
| • Length of TLC session | Variable. Allow adequate time in schedule to accommodate delays, rostering, check issuance, documentation. |
| • Advance scheduling | Yes. Scheduling groups in WICSIS is important and the best way to insure that groups are implemented. Impromptu groups can work, too. |
| • Flexibility of staff | Cross-train staff when possible, conduct impromptu groups and be prepared for group to go in unexpected direction. |

Tools

The Participant Update form (p. 63) may be used to help collect information needed during a nutrition education appointment. This type of form may be especially useful if checks are authorized while participants are in a group session. If this form or any other LA-produced form are used for this purpose, it must be destroyed (i.e. shredded) per policy and not maintained in a paper chart.

Logistics Scenarios for Talk, Listen, Connect Sessions

3 Staff are recommended for Clinic Scenarios 1, 2, & 3 below:

Clinic Scenario #1 (All checks authorized and printed after the group is completed.)

- The participant arrives, the Nutrition Assistant rosters in, collects information for the Participant Update Form and gives the participant a number based on the order they arrived at clinic.
- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant facilitates the group.
- The Clerk may view or enter information in the following windows:

Participant Overview – check appointment, issuance cycle, certification period, address and phone number

Household Composition – if needed change address, phone number, proxies and add household members

Participant Enrollment History – if needed change issuance cycle and extend certification

Participant Appointments – make future appointments

Daily Schedule – roster in participants

- After the group, the Clerk calls the participants in the order they arrived to the clinic.
- The participant is instructed to see the CPA or Nutrition Assistant.
- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant opens:

Participant Overview – to view future appointments made by the Clerk and make changes if necessary in Participant Appointments window.

- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant goes to **Prescription/Instruments** to tailor and authorize the food package.
- The participant/proxy signs for checks.
- The CPA, Nutrition Assistant or Clerk print and distribute the checks.

Clinic Scenario #2 (Checks authorized during and printed after the group is completed)

- The participant arrives, the Clerk rosters in, collects information for the Participant Update Form and gives the participant a number.
- The Participant Update sheet is reviewed by the Clerk, WICSIS updated before or during group.
- The Clerk sends the participant to the group.
- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant facilitates the group.

- While the participants are in the group, food packages are being authorized by another CPA and/or Nutrition Assistant (staff person not in the group).
- After the group, the Clerk, Nutrition Assistant, or CPA calls the participant in the order of their arrival to sign for, print and distribute the checks.
- If there are any questions from the Participant Update sheet, the Clerk, CPA and/or Nutrition Assistant talk to the participant and enter changes in WICSIS. The CPA and/or Nutrition Assistant authorize the checks. The Clerk and/or Nutrition Assistant print and distribute the checks.

Clinic Scenario #3 (Some checks authorized and printed prior, distributed before and/or after group completed.)

- The participant arrives, the Clerk rosters in, collects information for the Participant Update Form and gives the participant a number.
- The Participant Update sheet is reviewed by the Clerk, WICSIS is updated before group starts, as time allows.
- Food packages are authorized by the CPA and/or Nutrition Assistant (including any food package changes necessary) before group, as time allows. Checks are signed for and printed by the CPA, Nutrition Assistant, and/or Clerk before group starts. Agency policy determines if checks are distributed immediately or held in a secure area until the group is completed.
- The Clerk sends the participant to the group.
- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant facilitates the group.
- While the participants are in the group, the remaining Participant Update sheets are reviewed by the Clerk, WICSIS is updated.
- The CPA or Nutrition Assistant process food package changes (as possible) and authorize the remaining food packages during the group (staff person not conducting the group).
- After the group, if checks have been distributed, the participant will leave. When checks still need to be distributed, the participant is called in the order of their arrival for check signature, distribution and/or printing by the Nutrition Assistant or Clerk.
- If there are any questions from the Participant Update sheet, the Clerk, CPA and/or Nutrition Assistant talk to the participant. The CPA, Nutrition Assistant, or Clerk print and distribute the checks.

Participant Update Form Group Education Contact

Participant Name(s) _____

1. Since your last WIC appointment, have there been changes to your:
Address? No Yes (Please provide)

Phone number? No Yes (Please provide)

Proxies? No Yes (Please list)

2. Do you need any changes in your checks? No Yes (Please list)

3. Do you have any questions/concerns about your family's health or nutrition? No Yes
(Please list)

4. Preference for next appointment: Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat
(Circle day, indicate time) _____AM _____PM

For Office Use Only

Next Appointment: / / ____am ____ pm Sub Cert Nut Ed Med Doc Needed

Current Issuance Cycle: 1 2 3 Months Extend Cert: Y N Date to Extend to: / /

Food Package:

Milk: Whole/Nonfat/1% Lowfat/Tofu/Cheese
Lactose reduced/Free Whole/Nonfat
Evaporated/Dry Milk
Goat's Milk
Soy Beverage

BF Status: Fully/Mostly/Some
Multiples: Fully/Mostly/Some

Baby Food: Vegetable/Fruit/Meat/Cereal

Bread/Brown Rice/Tortillas

Formula Name: _____
Formula form: Conc/Powdered/RTF

PB/Dried Beans/Canned Beans

FP III Med Doc: Y N

Tuna/Salmon/Sardines

Restrictions: _____

Other: _____

DESTROY THIS FORM AFTER ENTERING INTO WICSIS

Chapter 6

How to Mentor New Staff



Mentoring

Mentoring may be done one-to-one, as well as in groups. However, the general instructions below are intended for one-to-one mentoring relationships. Group mentoring requires a separate training workshop for trainers as well as learners.

Who are mentors?

If you have attended a Talk, Listen, Connect training and have a respect for and an understanding of the process of facilitated group discussion, you can take on the important role of mentor. A mentor is supportive and trustworthy. Accepting others for who and where they are in their process, creates a safe space in which to take the necessary risks to try what might appear to be difficult or challenging techniques.

Your role as a mentor is to encourage the nutrition staff in your agency to use the stages of change, critical thinking skills, and facilitated group learning tools that were presented to you in the TLC training. The mentor holds the vision of good group facilitation, and challenges and stretches the learner to find her own voice as a facilitator.

What are some key points to consider?

Learners must understand and value the reasons that TLC sessions are preferred over lecture-style education in order to be successful.

- Encourage learners to be authentic and express themselves honestly.
- Urge risk taking.
- Reinforce reflective listening as a way of alleviating the stress of practicing a new skill and being in “your own head” or having an agenda.
- Promote the value of performance feedback. Gently guide mentees back on task during practice sessions. If observing a TLC session with real WIC participants, wait until the end of the group to give feedback, after participants have gone. Ask the facilitator to evaluate herself first. What did she think went well? What did she find challenging?
- Focus primarily on positive reinforcement, rather than pointing out errors. Suggest alternative ways of responding that would be more consistent with facilitated group process.

Why is behavior change theory foundational?

Nutrition professionals strive to promote healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. An understanding of behavior change theory helps to better understand the many factors influencing health-related behaviors and the most effective ways of promoting change. The bottom line is that programs, interventions, and messages that are guided by behavior change theory have a much greater chance of achieving positive outcomes. Assure your staff practice using the following components for effective group nutrition counseling/education:

- Participant-centered interactions
- Critical thinking skills
- Stages of change

- Emotional pulse points: pride, security, happiness and hope for the future
- Understanding of group dynamics, adult learning theory and anticipatory guidance
- Group facilitation skills

Chapter 7

Evaluation



Jefferson County WIC Program

Facilitator's Preparation and Evaluation Form

Becoming an effective facilitator requires training, practice and careful evaluation. Evaluating each Talk, Listen, Connect session is important, because you will be learning from your own experiences. It will take just a few minutes to make notes on how the session went and what you would do differently next time. Put these notes in a file and review them before your next TLC session, to remind you of the lessons that you have learned. You can use them at staff meetings to discuss how participants are responding. Staff can help each other enhance skills and improve areas that need to be changed and/or modified. Remember to note the conversation starter used as an important piece of evaluating a TLC session.



TLC Facilitator's Evaluation Form

How will you know the TLC session is the best it can be?

Date: _____ Time: _____ Facilitator's Name (optional): _____

You'll See In the...	Indicators	HE*	AC*	NI*	NA*
1. Environment					
a. Room set up	Chairs in circle (or set up for good interaction), enough space for learners, ways to accommodate children (toys, coloring, etc.)				
2. Opening					
a. Warm welcome	Welcome, good interactions with people entering, introducing self and others in a fun and meaningful way and states purpose of group				
b. Opener	Use conversation starter from the manual or own conversation starter to bring people to an emotional level quickly				
c. Conversation Starter (fill in) _____ _____					
3. Facilitation					
a. Connection	Continues to "connect" to participant pulse points using emotion-based questions (probing questions/clarifying statements)				
b. Responsiveness	Learners engaged, made to feel welcome, safe and respected				
c. Who's doing the talking?	No lecturing; group members are doing most of the talking				
d. Session length	Time spent is reasonable for situation and interest(s)				
e. Effectiveness	Encourages discussion, stays in the background of the conversations, bounces back questions to the group, stays impartial, and moves conversation along with cues from the group				
4. Summary					
a. Wrap-up	Summarizes key points and helps participants focus on action				
e. Spirit of the group	It's fun! People have walked away with one thing that they learned that will help them and/or feel good they helped others in group				

Successes:

Focus next time:

*HE = Highly Effective, AC = Accomplished/Acceptable, NI = Needs Improvement, NA = Not Applicable

Participant Form for Evaluating a Talk, Listen, Connect Session

Obtaining participants' opinions about how the session has gone can be a great help to you. Positive responses will make you feel good and negative responses will give you tips on what to do differently next time. Don't get upset at negative responses...only when we are alerted to what we could do differently are we likely to change and develop.

Over time, as you get more comfortable doing Talk, Listen, Connect sessions, the evaluations will reflect your progress as a facilitator. Evaluations will make it clear that you are making a difference in people's lives with this kind of nutrition education.

The participant evaluation form on the next page can be used to gather their feedback. When using this form or any other to gather participant comments it is important to allow the participant time and privacy to write their comments. Honest feedback is the goal and a hovering staff person will certainly be a barrier to providing such. Remember, participants do not put their name on this form. This will help you get more honest evaluations of your TLC session which is valuable information that can be used to determine if participants' needs are being met.



What did you think of today's Talk, Listen, Connect Session?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Please check your answer to the following statements:	Strongly Agree	Agree	OK	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed the group session today.					
I learned something today.					
I was able to share some things I know with others.					
I would like to be a part of more group sessions.					

What suggestions do you have for making sessions better?

What did you think of today's Talk, Listen, Connect Session?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Please check your answer to the following statements:	Strongly Agree	Agree	OK	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed the group session today.					
I learned something today.					
I was able to share some things I know with others.					
I would like to be a part of more group sessions.					

What suggestions do you have for making sessions better?

